

HISTORY OF THE PULASKI COUNTY COUNCIL FOR RETARDED AND EXCEPTIONAL
PERSONS, INC.

Early in 1955, Mrs. Virgil Holl, Mrs. Don Fisher and Mrs. J. Otis Buck made the first effort to get special education services for their sons. After being responsible for calling several meetings of interested persons together the Council for Retarded and Exceptional Persons was organized with the following officers: president, Mrs. J. Otis Buck; Vice-President, Mrs. Virgil Holl, Secretary, Mrs. Don Fisher; and treasurer, Leo Moncel. The original purpose of the group was to sufficiently interest groups and individuals to employ a teacher and begin a class for the slow learning children of the county. A representative from the State Department of Public Instruction had advised the group to do this to indicate to the Department and the local school boards their need for such services. Fund raising efforts were initiated, Mr. Henry Colgrove and Rev. Howard Bower took the cause to all the organizations in the county. Mr. and Mrs. Louis Salla, Mrs. Nell Brown, Mrs. Harry Ross and Mrs. Michael Garigan supported the above named officers in their efforts to contact individuals and groups for financial support. The response, both financially and morally, was most gratifying. The Council now needed to expand and a Board of Directors was added with the following; Mr. Chris Frazier, Mrs. Florence Earp, Mr. Harry Lund, Mrs. Virgil Holl, Mr. Leo Moncel, Rev. Howard Bower, Mr. Henry Colgrove, Mrs. J. Otis Buck, and Mrs. Don Fisher. The first incorporation certificate was issued by the state in March 1955.

The first special education class was organized in the Community Hall of the Christian Church in September 1955 consisting of 16 pupils with Mrs. Florence Earp as teacher and Mrs. J. Otis Buck as the helper. We got along fine and were happy with the work.

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We still had work to do, the Council wanted the class to be an extended service of a public school system. After research and study a group of the parents appeared before the Pulaski County Board of Education and presented their findings, needs and reasons. The Board of Education consisted of Mr. G. W. Gerichs, Superintendent; township trustees--Joseph Capouch, Cass, Joseph Fritz; Jefferson; George Logan, White Post; Sherald Bonnell, Harrison; Russell Bonnell, Indian Creek; Arthur Cramer, Franklin; Ross Nelson, Salem; Neal Hiatt, Van Buren; Eddie Bushman, Beaver; Arthur Selmer, Rich Grove; R. R. Shaw, Monroe; and Arthur Pugh, Tippecanoe. This group studied the request, later voted unanimously to add this new phase of education to the Pulaski County school system. In January 1956 our private special education class became a class in the public schools and was eligible for a portion of the operating cost from the State Aid Fund. The Department of Public Instruction made a ruling that all special education classes must be located on a ground floor so the second year the class was moved to the educational building of the Presbyterian Church, with the same staff, and Michael Gorski joined our class. We ended the year with 16 pupils. We realized that we needed to have two classes and proceeded to look for a second teacher.

In September of 1957 the classes were moved to the Ripley School and we named ourselves the Aurora School. Mrs. Henrietta Ferguson joined us to teach the M-1 class while Mrs. Earp taught the M-2 class. The Council initiated the hot lunch program by buying kitchen equipment during the year. The teachers and pupils prepared the lunches. The REMC of Wanatah, Indiana donated the dishwasher; the Fraternal Order of Police donated a used refrigerator; the Lions

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Club of Knox donated dishes, and Mr. Cloyde Earp donated the labor to install the sinks. Mrs. John Thurman came to be our cook; she stayed with us until Mrs. Russell Stankus took over the cooking in February 1964.

In October 1957, we were saddened by the sudden death of Michael Gorski, a pupil in Mrs. Ferguson's M-1 class. Friends of the family donated money in his memory and his parents provided a workbench for the school in his memory. In 1958 Mrs. Laverne Remboski, North Judson presented the school with a large room clock in memory of her father Ernest Arlt.

Harold Franks followed Marcia Newman Terry and Homer Cole as teacher for the M-1 class in September 1962.

It seems that every club or organization in the county has helped us in our endeavor with gifts, parties, and continuous interest in the work. This has been greatly appreciated and it has been challenging to those who have worked with the cause.

During the ten years of our operations 80 children have been through our classes. Of this number four are regularly employed, four are married and maintain homes, four returned to regular classes, three are in state institutions, six are trainees at the Habilitation Center, twenty-two are still in school. Others moved away and we have lost track of them. Knox Center and Fulton County started special education classes so they claimed those we had enrolled. At present we have pupils from North Judson-San Pierre and Lefft-Wheatfield Corporations besides, Monroe and Pulaski County School Corporation.

Other projects the Council for Retarded and Exceptional Persons have supported are: 1. Encourage, and in several cases with the

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help of the Crippled Children's Society, help finance the summer camps. 2. Helped finance four children for the County Historical trip. 3. Paid the deficit of the hot lunch program. 4. Offer a \$100.00 scholarship for anyone who will qualify themselves as special education personnel. 5. Organized the Pulaski County Habilitation Center.

Mr. and Mrs. George Trinosky, North Judson left a portion of their estate to our Council knowing of our efforts to help the handibapped and wishing to do something to aid us to go the second mile. This gift made it possible to move ahead with our plans for the Habilitation Center at Star City. The purpose of the Center is to offer vocational training for the graduates of the M-2 class. Here it is determined what type of work each trainee can do most efficiently and his skills are developed until the director feels this individual is ready to hold his place in competitive employment. He then is helped to get a job. Follow-up counselling and further training is continued where needed. Mr. Henry Jones, Logansport, is our director. Funds to keep the Center continuous are derived from the United Fund, County tax funds, individual and group donations, and grant-in-aid (a state fund).

Programs for the Retarded are not complete in this county. The Council for Retarded and Exceptional Persons have in their future plans a Day-care Center for the pre-school age child, a Community Clinic where counselling of parents and children can be done and psychological and psychiatric treatment may be accomplished. A survey by the Regional Mental Health Survey and Planning Committee is now underway and it may prove feasible to organize the latter on a neighboring county basis.